With the improvements of communication and construction of pipelines there has been an ever-increasing mutual contact between the nomads and the settled people of village and town. While tribal sheikhs are the first to come under the influence of modernization, the tribesmen are also gradually adopting the mode of existence of settled society. 369 178

CHAPTER 1

Definition of the Area under Consideration

This paper will limit itself primarily to the problem of sedentarization of the nomadic populations in the countries of the Fertile Crescent, that is: Iraq, Syria, Jordan (Transjordan) and Israel (Palestine), an area which distinguishes itself by its Moslem Arab majority,[1] its striking similarities of natural environment and social organization. Saudi Arabia was included in this study because of the inter-relations which exist between the Bedouin of the Arabian and Syrian deserts. Tribes of the Anezeh Confederation wander from Saudi Arabia through Jordan into Syria and back and sections of the Shammar migrate back and forth between Arabia and Iraq. 361 121

Desert and Rain

The chief common natural feature of the area is of a geo- 132 133

---

1. With the exception of the Kurdish language used by the Kurds in Syria and Iraq, Armenic spoken by the Nestorian Christians in Kurdistan and in a few villages in Syria, and Hebrew spoken by the Jewish community of Israel, the area is Arabic in character.

132 graphic-climatic characters[1] Regions with hot, rainless summers
133 and cool, wet winters where cultivation is possible and enormous expanses of desert with extremes of high temperatures and almost complete dryness where nothing but rough grasses, hardier shrubs can grow. The amount of annual precipitation will make the difference between the desert and oasis, it is ultimately the climatic conditions which will determine where and when cultivation is possible and what types of crops may be selected. The dividing line between the arid desert and the cultivated land is not a rigidly defined boundary. Generally there is a gradual transition from the oasis to the barren desert, steppe land[2] as a rule constituting the intervening belt. The width of the semi-desert or steppe land is not identical in all the regions, and it is not static. Throughout the ages it has varied in response to human factors.[3]

133 The steppe is the permanent domain of the nomads who breed
361 sheep and goats, and the camping area of the camel Bedouin during the hot summer months. Life in the desert is intolerable.

---

1. For a more detailed description of the common geographic characteristics of the Middle East see Fitzi, 1952. As the author deals with the entire area of the Middle East: North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian Plateau and Asia Minor, his numerical percentages of desert and oasis as well as settled and nomadic people are not necessarily applicable to the more limited region which is considered in this paper.
2. Districts receiving 200 - 300 mm of rain have steppe character, while tracts whose annual precipitation remains below this figure may be regarded as desert. Cf. Renne, 1946, p. 149.
3. The shifting boundary line between desert and oasis is not the result of changing natural conditions like climatic changes as it has been variously suggested.

166 up for the sake of economic self-improvement.

178 The pound who has settled creates a vacuum on the fringes of the desert which is filled by other desert tribes destined to undergo the same evolution, and thus the process of sedentarization goes on indefinitely.

CHAPTER IX

Survey of Recent Developments that Affected Bedouin Society

Saudi Arabia

● 133 Except for a few fertile oases, the vast area of Saudi Arabia consists entirely of arid desert and steppes which are green only for a short period in the winter. Arabia is the cradle and the classic country of the Bedouin.

656 The rule of Ibn Saud has been the turning point in the
166 history of Central Arabia. In his drive to found a powerful state, Ibn Saud realized that he must settle the Bedouin within his frontiers if the political structure he created was to last. Citizens, united in purpose and attached to the soil, and not roving nomads, constitute a reliable element which can assure permanency to a state organization.

656 To overcome the traditional tribal disunity, Ibn Saud inspired
186 the Bedouin with the doctrines of Wahabi puritanism which gave them a consciousness of unity. The Ikhwan (brothers, Wahabi confraternity), founded by Ibn Saud in 1912,[1] is the modern revival

---

1. 1912 is the date usually given for the founding of the Ikhwan. cf. Royal Institute, 1938, p. 85
According to Arnold Toynbee, however, the Ikhwan was founded in 1910. cf. Royal Institute, 1925, Vol. I, p. 262

h Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

dirah a small township as a sign that the whole tribe had embraced Wahhabi-ism, and abandoned its old ignorant and roaming existence.

The terrain included in the Mutair tribal *dirah* consists of part of the sandy *Dahana* region in the south, the rocky and broken *Sumrah* and *Wijiya* regions in the centre, and the steppe-like tablelands of the *Mujdair—Qara'a-* and *Muawwar* regions in the north.

The whole *dirah* is a choice and good one, and *'arfaj*, *nassi* and *hamdh*, the mainstay of camels and most perfect of all grazing for these animals, are to be found in plenty when the rainfall is good.

This Mutair *dirah* is approximately 120 miles broad by 180 miles long, and may be taken as a typical example of an average tribe's homeland. There are, of course, other tribes who own larger and more extensive areas, but then scarcity of water and poorer grazing has compelled them from earliest times to seize and hold these bigger blocks of land. For in actual fact a tribe does not want a larger tract than is sufficient for its needs. So if a tribe's country is rich in water and all forms of grazing, all it requires is an area as big as that of the Mutair.

The tribes surrounding the Mutair, who own *dirahs* similar to their's, are as follows:

The 'Awazim and 'Ajman on the east and south-east.

The Sbei and Sahul on the south.

The Harb, Shammar and Dhafir on the west, and Kuwait territory on the north, which in olden times, and before boundaries of western conception were introduced, all belonged to the Mutair, except for the narrow coastal strip which was included in the 'Awazim *dirah*.*

A tribe does not, of course, remain always isolated in its own *dirah*. If rains are good and grazing is plentiful, it naturally stops at home, but if rains fail it must migrate to places where grazing exists, and so overflows into the territories of its neighbours. It cannot, of course,

* It should be realised that there are two other great groups of the Mutair tribe, stretching from Al Qasim in the centre of Arabia to near Medina in the Hijaz. They are known as the Bani 'Abdillah Mutair, and Muyamar, and in numbers and strength are perhaps superior to their cousins the 'Ibra and Rashi described above. The whole tribe, of course, is one, and though the Bani 'Abdillah have their own powerful Shaikhs, they will all follow the standard of Al Duwish the hereditary Shaikh who resides at Artawiyah.†

† For the names of the Mutair, 'Awazim and Shammar Shaikhs see Appendix II. A map of the Mutair Tribal *dirah* will be found at the end of the book.

13: Thesiger T-3 (ca. 1949) 1950 MU Saudi Arabia
Bedouin M24

they must leave their rifles at a police post, but once they have climbed back on to the escarpment they are free to do as they like, subject only to the restraints of tribal life. Similarly, while they are inside the towns of Inner Oman, where the Imam has established law and order, they must behave themselves, but once they are outside the walls they can only be controlled by diplomacy and not by force, while everywhere in the Dhahirah of Northern Oman jealous and often hostile sheikhs vie with each other in the lavishness of their hospitality and the scale of their gifts to win the support of the Badu. There no sheikh can enforce his authority over the tribes, and none of them would try, lest by doing so he should alienate their support in time of need.

To understand the Badu character and way of life you must understand the land in which they live—a harsh, unforgiving land which conditions their lives so that they, too, are hard, hard in body and mind. They live in the desert—that is to say, in country which, judged by ordinary standards, is waterless. This applies equally to the barren, broken limestone mountains near the southern coast, to the flat, featureless gravel plains, and to the sands of the Empty Quarter itself, where the mountainous dunes, some of which are 700 feet high, run one behind the other for hundreds of miles. There are, of course, some wells in this desert, but they are usually few and far between: the Sa'ar country has two permanent wells in it, Maswakh and Zamakh; the Manahil country has three or four. Thus in an area the size of Norfolk there might be two wells. I have myself twice travelled four hundred miles between wells. I admit that this is exceptional, but Badu have raided across these very stretches of desert, riding out and back again without touching at a well. You can think what this means when you realize that this distance is twice as far as from Dover to Edinburgh, and that these Arabs travelled at a speed of three miles per hour, relying only on the water which they could carry with them without foundering their camels, and that the camels themselves did not get a drink until they returned a month later.

It seldom rains in this desert; in many parts it has not rained for five years, and I have been in places where not a drop of rain has fallen for twenty-five years. By Badu standards a couple of hours' heavy rain in the year means a good year. They cannot, therefore, cultivate, but have to depend for their livelihood on their small herds of camels, and in quest of the pasturage which springs up after rain they travel great distances. Most of this vegetation is not green, but desert plants like the succulent yellow-flowering tribulus and heliotrope, and in the sands these plants will remain green after a few days' rain for as long as three and four years. But they do not last so long on the gravel plains and among the hills; in such places, however, grow scattered trees and bushes, such as the acacias, which afford valuable pasturage. Where there is rich grazing the Badu can remain for six and even nine months without water, for their camels get all the moisture they require from these green plants, and camels' milk suffices the Arabs themselves for food and drink. In the heat of summer the camels must be watered once a week, and if there is no well near the grazing on which they have wintered they must move back on to a permanent well and graze their herds as best they can on the

22:Raswan T-5(ca. 1911-1930)1930 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Bedouin MJ4

of their wanderings approaches close to Baghdad, Kerbela, and An-Nejef. To the south, in seasons of sufficient rain, they pasture their herds on the tract of Al-Hejera; but when rain is scanty they move westward and thence northward around the southern and western edges of Al-Wudiyan. Thence, crossing Wadi al-Ghadaf, Wadi al-Hasimi, and Wadi Hauran (near Ar-Rutba, now a military outpost of 'Iraq) they reach their northern limits at the base of the mountains Abu Rijmen and Jebel Bishri between As-Sukhne and Deyr az-Zor. Within this *dira* lie the boundaries of the pasture districts of other tribes. In the north the Fed'an range as far south as 'Aqlat Shuab (where their great chief Turki ibn Mheyd lies buried), and the Sba'a go south to Wadi al-Ghadaf. The Fed'an and Sba'a are brother tribes, of the same blood as the 'Amarat, and all three unite when one is attacked by outsiders. The territory of the Ruala, also related by blood to the 'Amarat, overlaps that of the latter in Al-Wudiyan and Al-Hejera; and on the south Al-Hejera is also occupied by the Shammar (Fig. 2). In addition, the 'Amarat share part of their *dira* with 'Aqeydat, Dleym, and Khaza'el (Fig. 3), tribes of the second rank, despised by the strong Bedouins of noble blood, with whom, however, they are occasionally allowed to migrate.

619
131
101
221

Relation to Natural Features

Since very early times three great natural features have borne a close relation to the territorial subdivision of the major nomadic nations of northern and central Arabia. The first is a well defined depression that cuts across the entire peninsula from the Red Sea at Al-Wejh to Basra and is marked by the irregular lines of Wadi Humdh to the west and of Wadi Ruma' and its continuation, Al-Batin, to the east. The watershed between these two systems of wadies lies east of Khaybar in Jebel Aliyadh. The ancient Bedouin tribes occupying areas north of this depression are now represented also in Syria and Mesopotamia, but those with pastures south of the depression appear to have remained in central Arabia.

133
162

The second great natural feature is the *Nafud* sand desert and its principal outliers, Al-Lahbe and Ad-Dhana. The sands of the last reach south across Wadi Ruma' and, extending between Hufhuf and Riyadh, finally connect with the boundless southern sands of the "Empty Quarter." These *nafuds* have always constituted natural limits for the migrating nomads and their herds. During winter and spring they are healthful country: out of the sands, moistened by the rains, springs up a fragrant pasture growth, and the bushes sprout forth life-giving leaves and flowers; but at other seasons all is a desolate waste. On rare occasions the nomad nations whose normal ranges lie far north in Syria return to this cradle of their race. The northern

22:Ra'wan 1-5(ca. 1911-1930)1930 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Bedouin MJ4

group of the Weld 'Ali, for instance, in certain winters wander with their powerful allies, the Ruala, southward to the neighborhood of Teyma', returning north again after their mares and camels have foaled.

The third great natural feature is the chain of hills (Ar-Rawaq, Abu Rijmen, and Jebel Bishri) which stretches in an almost straight line from Damascus to Deyr az-Zor on the Euphrates. Sheep-breeding Bedouins are found north of these hills, camel breeders to the south. The sheep breeders occupy a steppe-like rolling country, rich in pasture which lasts into the beginning of summer. Settled areas are nowhere far distant to east and west, and the tribes occupying these steppes will undoubtedly be the first to establish permanent settlements. As far north as Tel el-Abyadh near the Turkish frontier the writer has noticed members of the Fed'an intermarrying with settlers of that region. Mijhem ibn Mheyd, chief of the Fed'an, owns many villages in Syria, and several thousand of his Bedouins are even now at work in the fields, although the majority prefer tending live stock to plowing. The Tayy, one of the purest, most aristocratic Bedouin tribes from central Arabia, are now found in Mesopotamia, far north near Nisibin, where they seldom fold their tents, pack them on camels, and carry them to new pasture grounds. Half of their tents are "permanently" fixed, with reed and clay walls supporting the goat's-hair canvas. Indeed, the Tayy have become a degenerate people!

The Bedouins with the largest pasture circles (those bordering on the Nafud) will probably survive longest as true nomads. These are the great camel breeders, the Ruala and some of the Shammar, who hold the vast tracts of Al-Hamad and Al-Wudiyan between the Nafud and the northern line of hills.

Political Changes

If the problematical political frontiers between the British and French spheres of influence in northern Arabia are maintained, changes may be expected in the migration territories of the Bedouins. The following, in my opinion, might well take place. The tribes whose territories are now cut by the 30th parallel would split, part of them remaining in Ibn Sa'ud's domains and the rest migrating to the north. The continuance of yearly warfare (for the most part in the spring) between the Zana Muslim (Ruala and Weld 'Ali) and other 'Aneze tribes would finally result in an agreement that would assign to the Ruala who remain in Syria the entire Hamad and western part of Al-Wudiyan. The rest of Al-Wudiyan would be given to the 'Amarat, and the steppe country north of the hills to the Fed'an and Sba'a. First the Fed'an and then the Sba'a would gradually become